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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [LG](#)
SUBJECT: LATVIAN WILLINGNESS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEW WAY
FORWARD ON IRAQ

REF: RIGA 165

Classified By: Ambassador Catherine Todd Bailey. Reason: 1.4 (D)

¶1. (C) The Latvians remain committed to the mission in Iraq and support the new way forward. However, they cannot extend their combat troops beyond their planned departure this summer but are willing to respond to our existing requests to provide headquarters, PRT, and training support. They hope that the coalition conference April 30 - May 1 will provide concrete billets for which they can begin to plan assignments. Ambassador, DATT, and other mission elements regularly discuss Iraq deployments with all elements of the GOL.

¶2. (C) As post has previously reported (ref A), the Latvians are fully committed to the change in their contributions to Iraq. This has been fully coordinated with the USG and Poland in multiple locations along the way. Publicly, the GOL is deeply committed to ending the combat mission in Iraq by this summer. As an example, MOD Slakteris making headlines with his April 23 announcement that the current Latvian troops in Iraq will be home before the mid-summer (Jani) holiday. We do not believe that there would be any political support for extending the combat mission. Moreover, Latvian law mandates a certain amount of pre-deployment training that cannot be provided in the time required by law given overall Latvian military op tempo (current deployments in Afghanistan and Kosovo and planned increases in Afghanistan).

¶3. (C) The Latvians remain interested in a continued military presence in Iraq. When the President announced the New Way Forward in January, the Latvians immediately asked how they could help. The Deputy CHOD and US DATT flew to CENTCOM in mid-February to discuss billets that the Latvians could fill. Unfortunately, CENTCOM planners did not yet have suggested locations. The Latvians plan to keep roughly 12 - 15 officers and senior enlisted personnel in Iraq once their combat forces depart. The Latvians have received a request from VCJCS asking for help in filling unmanned coalition billets. The Deputy CHOD will attend the coalition conference in Tampa on April 30 and will be prepared to have detailed conversations about where Latvian personnel can be of greatest use. We believe this is the most valuable vehicle of dialogue at this point -- military to military discussions about how to make use of what the Latvians have offered.
BAILEY